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HUNTER

SPORTS OF THE
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THE
SPORTS OF THE GENII.

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THE
SPORTS
OF
THE GENII.

BY MRS. JOHN HUNTER.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR T. PAYNE, MEWS-GATE, CASTLE-STREET,
LEICESTER-SQUARE.

1804.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE "SPORTS OF THE GENII" were originally written for the amusement of some young people in the winter of 1797: they took their rise from the beautiful groups of winged boys which filled the port-folio of Miss MACDONALD, who was in the habit of imagining and sketching them with the greatest facility: the idea of arranging and forming them into subjects for the following Fables, was my own. The early death of a young woman of uncommon talents, and surrounded with every advantage this world can bestow, gives to her designs a peculiar interest: and not only those who knew and admired her, but every person of taste and feeling, must view them with sensations of tender regret.

The little Poems which accompany the following thirteen etchings, will, I hope, be read with indulgence,

INTRODUCTION.

having been the means of preserving the original outlines, which would otherwise have been, probably, destroyed. For the Dedication, I am obliged to the ingenious Artist whose name is prefixed to the Plate. And now let me add, that, in committing the “Sports of the Genii” to the press, I am impelled alone by affection and gratitude to a family for whom I have the highest respect, and to whom I owe the most serious obligations; and I feel gratified by offering them this mark, however inadequate it may be, of my attachment.

A. H.

Lower Grosvenor-street, }
January 17, 1804. }



TO THE MEMORY
OF
SUSAN MACDONALD,

ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR ARCHIBALD MACDONALD,
LORD CHIEF BARON OF ENGLAND, AND THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LADY LOUISA MACDONALD;

WHO DIED AT LISBON, WHERE SHE WENT FOR THE RECOVERY OF HER HEALTH,
MARCH 1803, IN THE 22^d YEAR OF HER AGE.

LED by paternal Love's protecting hand,
Where golden Tagus laves the Lusian strand,
In search of balmy Health, we saw thee part,
While Hope spoke comfort to the doubting heart.
Vain were, alas ! the promises she gave !--
The blossom fell, and dropp'd into the grave !
These airy forms, which erst thy hand pourtray'd,
Recal to Fancy's eye thy parted shade :
Taste shall thy early talents learn to mourn,
While sacred Friendship marks thy distant Urn.



THE
SPORTS
OF
THE GENII.

PROLOGUE.

IF Couzens from his blots could form
A landscape, cataract, or storm,
Why may not we, with equal ease,
Make forms to think just as we please ?
Amongst the common sons of earth,
The passion gives the action birth ;
But we, reversing Nature's laws,
Make the effect precede the cause.

CUPID'S HOLIDAY.

(JANUARY 25, 1797 *.)

“ BRING my new car and swiftest doves,”
 Cry'd Cupid to the laughing Loves
 That flutter'd round his throne.
 Eager his mandate to obey,
 A thousand pinions flit away.
 When his commands are known.

“ Here! take my quiver and my bow---
 “ I shall not need them, now, below : ”
 Then mounts his equipage ;
 While Zephyr seem'd to lag behind,
 As if he felt not much inclin'd
 The peril to engage.

* The Birth-day of the Princess CHARLOTTE OF WALES.



Quoth he, "What whimsy have we here,
 "To travel at this time of year,
 "And visit folks below?
 "When not a leaf is to be seen,
 "Except some prim old evergreen
 "Just peeping thro' the snow.

"No roses scent the chilly air;
 "No blushing pink, or lily fair :
 "And, for your hot-house plants,
 "Supposing one could gain admission,
 "'Tis only fit for a physician
 "To seek their sickly haunts.

"Dear Master, let us wait awhile,
 "Till Nature shall begin to smile,
 "And her full chorus sings.
 "My boist'rous brothers are abroad :
 "If we should meet them on the road,
 "They'll tear my silken wings."

“ Peace ! fool,” cry’d Cupid : “ haste away :

“ I’m going to keep Holiday ;

“ And Joy shall hold my rein.

“ A lovely Princess, I am told,

“ Such as adorn’d the times of old,

“ Now smiles on Earth again.

“ They tell me, that her infant face

“ Already beams with ev’ry grace

“ That my lov’d Psyche dress’d,

“ When in such sort the budding flow’r

“ Of Beauty show’d its wondrous pow’r

“ To sway the raptur’d breast.

“ I fain would view the lovely maid,

“ That shall my falling altars aid,

“ And point my golden dart ;

“ Ere Envy can, with pois’nous tooth,

“ Canker the blossoms of her youth,

“ Or Malice wound her heart.”





CUPID,

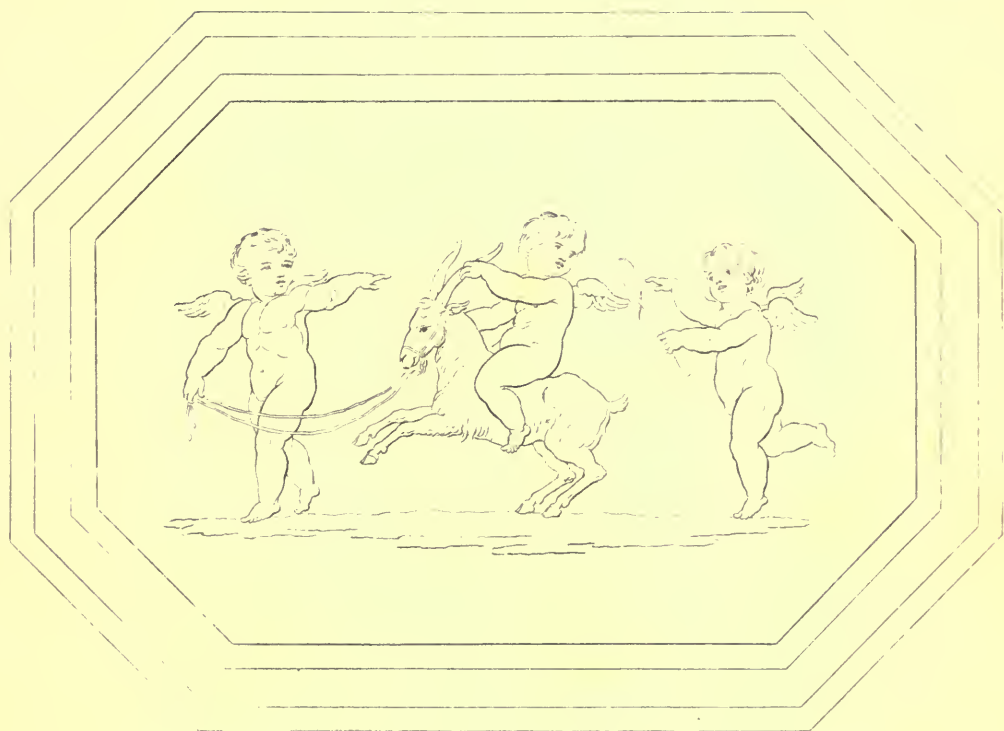
JUDGE IN HIS OWN CAUSE.

CUPID'S half-brother, one fine day,
When he was idly gone to play,
Slily stole his bow and arrows,—
Feigning he would shoot at sparrows ;
But other sport was in his mind :
To wicked mischief still inclin'd,
He left the playful sportive Loves,
And crept where Venus kept her doves ;
And hit the fairest of the twain,
Which us'd to draw her painted wain :
Then on her altar laid his prey ;
And, lest its fellow 'scap'd away,
There fix'd it, by a silken string,
Till he could clip its silver wing.

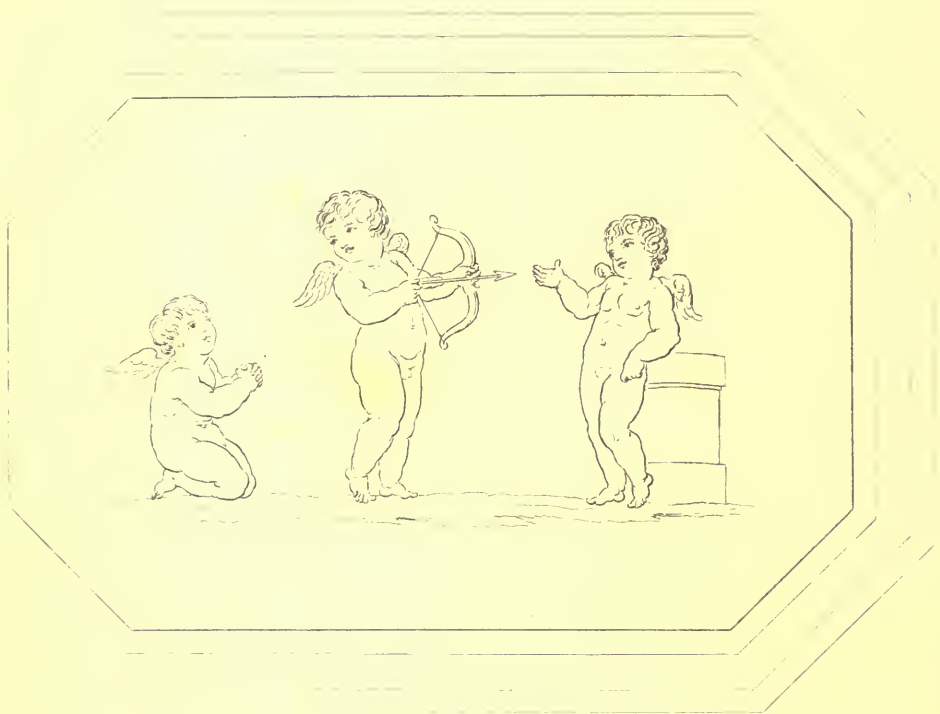
Zephyr beheld the impious deed,
 And, hast'ning with indignant speed,
 Seiz'd on the culprit, bound his hands ;—
 And see how like a knave he stands !—
 Cupid, provok'd, would have him sham'd,
 For much the cruel deed he blam'd :
 To mischief tho' himself inclin'd,
 'Tis mischief of another kind.

“ Unworthy son of Beauty's Queen,
 “ Base, cruel, dastardly, and mean,”
 Cry'd angry Cupid ; “ thou shalt be
 “ Severely whipp'd by Phantasy :
 “ Then on a goat I'll have thee ride ;
 “ And Ridicule shall be thy guide ;
 “ While one behind shall make thee feel
 “ Repentance close upon thy heel.”









THE TRIUMPH.

INDIFF'RENCE brav'd the God of Love,
 And proudly bid him shoot his best ;
 For he his keenest shaft would prove,
 And turn his Godship to a jest :

For, drench'd in Lethe's sullen stream,
 No thought return'd, the flame to feed :
 No wishes paint the waking dream ;
 No hopes are born, nor fears succeed.

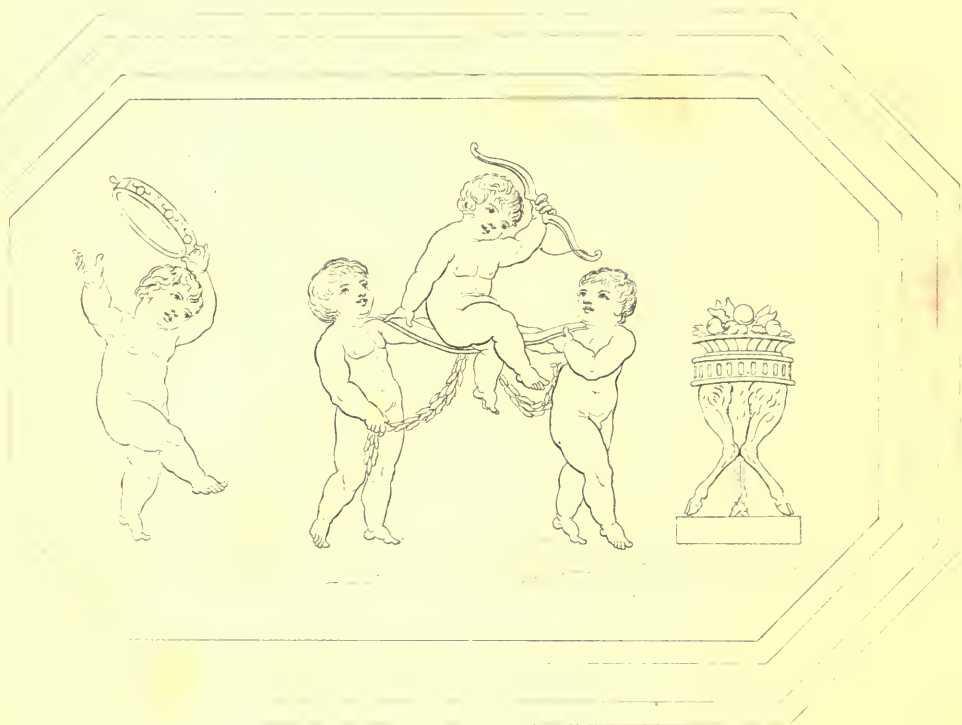
“ For me, thy golden shafts prepare ;
 “ Thy fond affections grant to me ;
 “ I wish to know thy tender care,”—
 Cry'd kneeling Sensibility.

Love cares not for an easy prey :
 He drew his arrow to the head :
 The feather'd shaft flew swift away,
 And by the chance of war it sped.

Finding a vulnerable place
 Close to the heart, it quickly pass'd ;
 Self-love had occupy'd the space,
 But now was driven out at last.

Subdued Indiff'rence now no more
 Shall e'er resume his careless rest ;
 Nor can the Fates again restore
 The ice that melted in his breast.

See where, on Cupid's altar, lies
 Fresh buds of Hope and fancy flow'rs;
 A hecatomb of tender sighs,
 And tears that fall in plenteous show'rs.



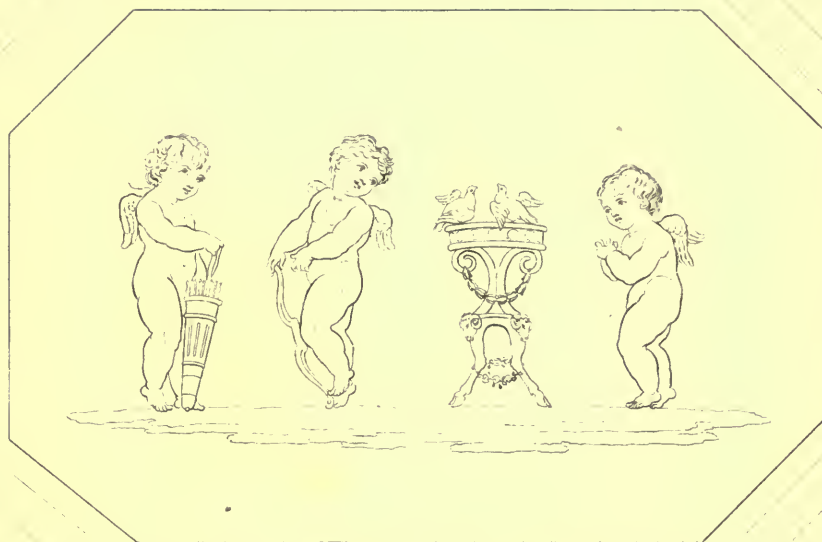
The laughing Loves loud clap their wings ;
The Triumph gaily moving on.
Around the jocund chorus sings,
“ Love’s Victory is fairly won.”

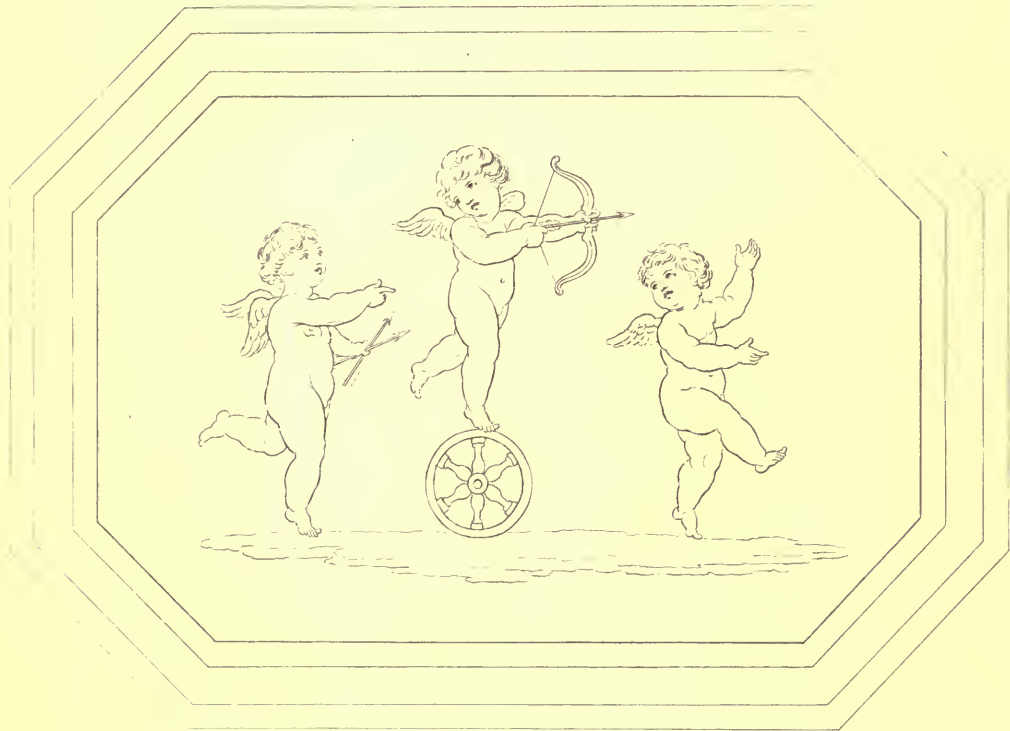
THE SUPPLIANT.

“ I TAKE thy gift, and hear thy vow,”
Cry’d Cupid, as he bent his bow ;
“ And soon thy charming foe shall find
“ We are not, as she thinks us, blind.”

“ Alas !” the suppliant Youth reply’d,
“ She’s guarded by a host of Pride ;
“ And Avarice, who never sleeps,
“ The watch and ward continual keeps.

“ I weep to think thy golden dart
“ Can never reach her frozen heart :
“ Or, if it should, the flames that play
“ Around its point, would die away.”





“ If open force will not succeed,”
 Return’d the God, “ we must proceed
 “ By stratagem :—from Fortune’s wheel
 “ We ’ll take our aim, and make her feel.

“ From thence the feather’d shaft shall fly,
 “ And, haply, strike upon her eye :
 “ By random shots some hearts are won :
 “ For Beauty’s Queen assists her son.

“ Report shall whisper in her ear
 “ Hopes of some thousand pounds a-year.
 “ Two of the sentinels our own !
 “ Courage ! my boy—we ’ll take the town.”

THE CAPTIVE.

“FORBEAR! forbear!” Compassion cry’d;

“Nor treat with cold insulting pride

“The Captive in thy pow’r.

“Behold her form, in beauty gay;

“Nor, in thy cruel, thoughtless play,

“Abridge her little hour.

“Poor trembling insect! easy caught!

“How distant, in thy simple thought,

“The danger, when most near!

“Perhaps on Clytie’s golden breast

“Thou sought for safety—hop’d for rest;

“And sorrow found thee there!



“ The Muse shall mourn thy hapless fate ;

“ For Love can torture more than Hate,

“ And will—because he may.

“ O may some star propitious beam,

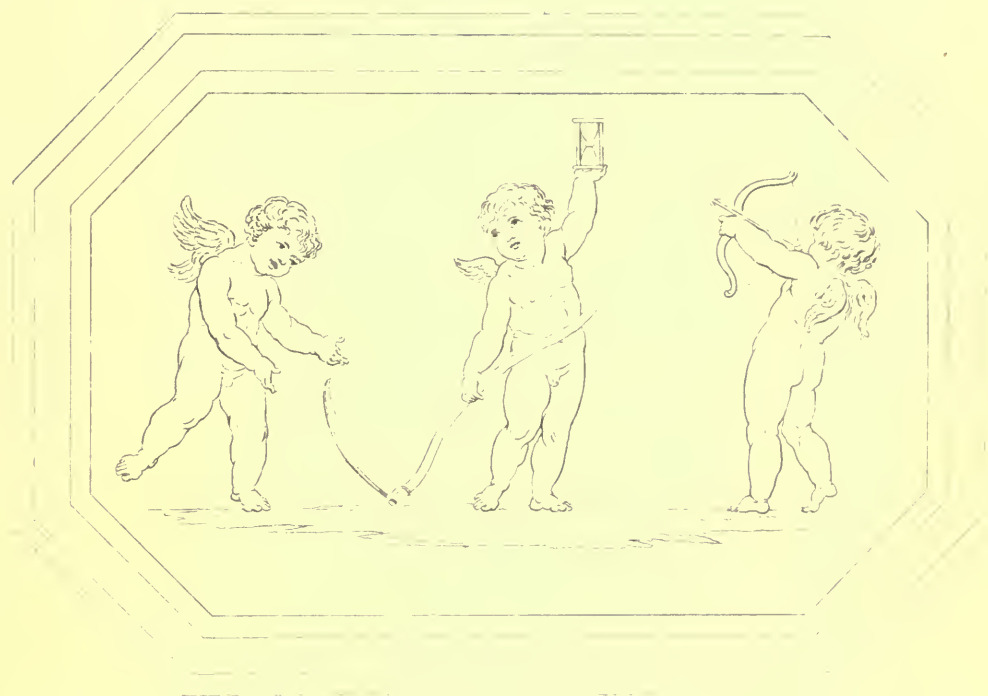
“ And save thee from the dire extreme,

“ Speeding thy flight away ! ”

LOVE AND IMPATIENCE.

LOVE and Impatience, idle boys,
In search of butterflies and toys,
 One sun-shine Holiday,
Tir'd of their sport, tir'd with the heat,
They saunter'd home with ling'ring feet,
 Wishing the tedious time away.

Passing a solitary bow'r,
They spy'd a Quarter of an Hour
 Glide lazily and slowly on :
He dragg'd a sithe ; he held a glass,
To show the moments as they pass :
 His infant wings were scarcely grown.



“ Ho! ho!” quoth Love—“ we ’re two to one :

“ If we can’t force the Father on,

“ At least we ’ll drive his little Son.

“ His tiny wings, indeed, are small;—

“ I doubt if he can fly at all;

“ But certainly we ’ll make him run.

“ Seize you his sithe; I ’ll break his glass :

“ We ’ll make the moment swiftly pass :

“ See, how slow the urchin lingers !”

Twang went the bow—the arrow flies :

Snap went the glass in Cupid’s eyes;—

Poor Impatience cut his fingers.

EPILOGUE.

CRITICS sharp, with brow severe,
Our small volume come not near :
Authors grave, and learn'd, and wise,
Never this way turn your eyes.

Let us wander, wild and free,
In sport and whimsicality,
Thro' gay Fancy's flow'ry maze ;
Nor blame us, tho' you scorn to praise.

THE END.





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